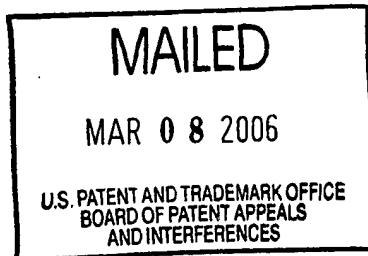


UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE



BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

Ex parte STEPHEN W. EDWARDS

Application 09/353,887

ORDER RETURNING UNDOCKETED APPEAL TO EXAMINER

This application was received electronically at the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences on January 27, 2006. A review of the application has revealed that the application is not ready for docketing as an appeal. Accordingly, the application is herewith being electronically returned to the examiner. The matters requiring attention prior to docketing are identified below:

A review of the Image File Wrapper (IFW) indicates that appellant filed a Final Rejection was filed on January 12, 2004 which lists the following rejections:

1. Claims 1, 4-13, 15-19, 21-22, 24-25 and 35-38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz (5,886,705) in view of Young et al (U.S 5,831,637) and Tanaka et al (5,793,371), and further in view of Saunders et al (6,046,747) [page 2]; and

2. Claims 14, 20 and 26-34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz, [Y]oung and Tanaka et al in view of Saunders et al, and further in view of Chimoto (5,550,961) [page 13].

However, in the Examiner's Answer mailed May 5, 2005, the following rejections are listed:

1. Claims 1, 4-8, 21-22, and 24-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz (U.S. Pat. No. 5,886,705) in view of Young et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,831,637) and Tanaka et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,793,371), and further in view of Saunders et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,046,747) [pages 4 and 5];

2. Claims 9-13, 15-19 and 35-38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz (U.S. Pat. No. 5,886,705) in view of Tanaka et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,793,371), and further in view of Saunders et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,046,747) [page 10];

3. Claims 14, 20, 26-28 and 32-34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz (U.S. Pat. No. 5,886,705) and Tanaka et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,793,371) in view of Saunders et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,046,747), and further in view of Chimoto (U.S. Pat. No. 5,550,961) [page 15]; and

4. Claims 29-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lentz (U.S. Pat. No. 5,886,705), Tanaka et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,793,371) and Saunders et al (U.S. Pat. No. 6,046,747) in view of Chimoto

(U.S. Pat. No. 5,550,961), and further in view of Young et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,831,637) [page 19].

It appears that the four rejections appearing in the Examiner's Answer are new grounds of rejection.

37 CFR § 41.39 reads as follows:

§ 41.39 Examiner's answer.

(a)(1) The primary examiner may, within such time as may be directed by the Director, furnish a written answer to the appeal brief including such explanation of the invention claimed and of the references relied upon and grounds of rejection as may be necessary, supplying a copy to appellant. If the primary examiner determines that the appeal does not comply with the provisions of §§ 41.31 and 41.37 or does not relate to an appealable action, the primary examiner shall make such determination of record.

(2) An examiner's answer may include a new ground of rejection.

(b) If an examiner's answer contains a rejection designated as a new ground of

rejection, appellant must within two months from the date of the examiner's answer exercise one of the following two options to avoid sua sponte dismissal of the appeal as to the claims subject to the new ground of rejection:

(1) Reopen prosecution. Request that prosecution be reopened before the primary examiner by filing a reply under § 1.111 of this title with or without amendment or submission of affidavits (§§ 1.130, 1.131 or 1.132 of this title) or other evidence. Any

amendment or submission of affidavits or other evidence must be relevant to the new ground of rejection. A request that complies with this paragraph will be entered and the application or the patent under ex parte reexamination will be reconsidered by the examiner under the provisions of § 1.112 of this title. Any request that prosecution be reopened under this paragraph will be treated as a request to withdraw the appeal.

(2) Maintain appeal. Request that the appeal be maintained by filing a reply brief as set forth in § 41.41. Such a reply brief must address each new ground of rejection as set forth in § 41.37(c)(1)(vii) and should follow the other requirements of a brief as set forth in § 41.37(c). A reply brief may not be accompanied by any amendment, affidavit (§§ 1.130, 1.131 or 1.132 of this title) or other evidence. If a reply brief filed pursuant to this section is accompanied by any amendment, affidavit or other evidence, it shall be treated as a request that prosecution be reopened before the primary examiner under paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(c) Extensions of time under § 1.136(a) of this title for patent applications are not applicable to the time period set forth in this section. See § 1.136(b) of this title for extensions of time to reply for patent applications and § 1.550(c) of this title for extensions of time to reply for ex parte reexamination proceedings.

In order to include a new ground of rejection in the Examiner's Answer, the examiner must follow the guidelines set forth in training material entitled "Rules of Practice Before the Board of

Application 09/353,887

Patent Appeals and Interferences, Final Rule," located at the following URL:

www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/bpai/fr2004/moreinfo.html

The requirements for a new ground of rejection are:

- 1) Approval by a Technology Center Director or designee; and
- 2) Prominently identified, by a separate heading with all capital letters in the following sections of the Examiner's Answer:

Grounds of Rejection to be Reviewed on Appeal section, and

Grounds of Rejection section.

To correct this problem, the examiner will need to vacate the Examiner's Answer mailed May 5, 2005. Once the Examiner's Answer mailed May 5, 2005 is vacated, the examiner has the following options:

- 1) to write a new Examiner's Answer without the new grounds of rejection;
- 2) to reopen prosecution; or
- 3) to write a new Examiner's Answer properly setting forth the new grounds of rejection.

Application 09/353,887

Accordingly, it is

ORDERED that the application is returned to the
examiner to:

- 1) vacate the Examiner's Answer mailed May 5, 2005;
- 2) to select one of the following options:
 - a) reopen prosecution;
 - b) write a new Examiner's Answer without the new grounds of rejection; or
 - c) write a new Examiner's Answer properly setting forth the new grounds of rejection; and
- 3) for such further action as may be appropriate.

BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS
AND INTERFERENCES

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